

currenTs

The Official Newsletter of PS 8 37 Hicks Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 Volume 3, Issue 1

Winter 2007

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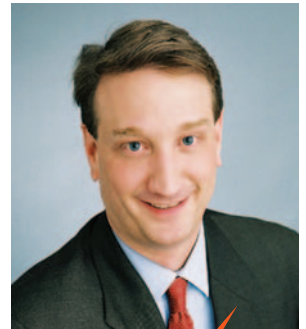
Get in touch with your inner electronics geek by getting involved in P.S. 8's new robotics team, "NanoSquad."

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We started off the school year with some big changes: a number of new teachers and other staff, a school with every classroom filled with children for the first time in memory and our beloved Olivia Ellis moved on to work at the New York City Department of Education.

These last couple of years have been chock full of change. It seems like every year something big has happened – from P.S. 8 being designated a magnet school and adopting the Renzulli method two years ago to hosting a movie premiere fund-raiser last fall to Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein starting the school year here, just a few short months ago. We have reached a point where we need to pause a moment, take a deep breath and assess what we have and think about where we go from here. Over the next few semesters I plan to nurture many of the wonderful programs we have in place, prune judiciously and add with care.

When Olivia left, a number of people asked if I planned to move on too. The answer is no – I have found my home here at P.S. 8. My goal is to create stability and sustainability at P.S. 8 to ensure that the excellence we have achieved and are still working on remains here for a very long time.



Sincerely,
Seth Phillips, Principal

CALLING ALL ALUMS!

If you or someone you know attended P.S. 8, we would like to hear from you. Please contact the Alumni Committee at ps8alumni@gmail.com or tel. 718 398 5834.

PS 8 The Robert Fulton School
The Magnet School for Exploration, Research and Design

Our Magnet Grant at Work:

Enrichment Program Combines Learning and the Arts

By **Maryanne Buechner**, First-Grade and Pre-K Parent

Marquis Studios is back! Every class from kindergarten through fifth grade will benefit from one three-month enrichment program during the 2006–2007 school year. The fourth- and fifth-graders are currently studying Native American traditions and culture through dance and movement with Joan Merwyn, a physical theater performer and choreographer. Starting in January the third-graders, whose social studies curriculum includes a unit on Asia, will learn a Japanese style of drumming called Taiko (using buckets and empty water-cooler barrels) with Marquis' expert percussionist Hector Morales. The second grade classes have started their course in architecture with teaching artist Kirstin Broussard; students will work in teams to design and construct model buildings from the neighborhood. Come spring, the first-graders will make puppets, write scripts and perform stories from their favorite books as an extension of their work in literacy while kindergarteners will get to try feather balancing, scarf juggling and other forms of circus arts.

"We're giving students and teachers an alternative approach to the subjects that are already in the curriculum," Marquis Studios Executive Director David Marquis said. "We're great believers in the theory that some children learn best by reading a book, while others learn better while dancing or drawing." In general, he added, "Children who participate in the arts achieve more academically." Bob Mikos, P.S. 8's new Comprehensive School Reform Coordinator, supervises the program; sessions are once a week for 15 weeks.

What's great about Marquis, Principal Seth Phillips says, is that the teachers are flexible and responsive. "They work with us to figure out the best programs," he said. "It's a true partnership, and the individuals working with our students are top-notch."

One November morning, Marva Flash's class of fifth-graders spent a quarter of an hour reenacting a Native

American celebration, dancing around the room in a circle accompanied by some traditional music on CD. At one point the class split into small groups and took turns miming the Iroquois and Algonquin ways of hunting and gathering. Some students pretended to pick berries; another group chopped down a tree and rolled the "log" back to camp. "There are no stores; you are living in the woods and you have to find food," Merwyn said to the class as they pretended to dig up roots and wild mushrooms. Later everybody cast imaginary fishing nets and hauled them back in. "The nets are full of fish," Merwyn prodded, as students pretended to strain from the hard labor. The plan is to have the kids incorporate these movements into the choreography of a show they plan to perform for parents at the end of the session.



The Marquis Studios enrichment program at P.S. 8 emphasizes learning through movement. Here Ms. Taranto's 4th grade class re-enacts a Native American Friendship Dance.

Marquis Studios, based in Brooklyn, works with 80 New York City public schools across the five boroughs. Only six of those schools – including P.S. 8 – are "pARTnership" schools. "These are the schools that have a particularly strong interest in bringing arts education to their students as part of the overall academic experience," David Marquis said. "P.S. 8 was chosen because of its leadership and its commitment to the program." Funding for the Marquis program comes partly from P.S. 8's federal magnet grant and partly from monies raised by Marquis Studios, whose backers include JP Morgan Chase, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Kornfeld Foundation and New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs.

You can read about the people from Marquis Studios who are working with P.S. 8 students at www.marquistudios.org. Click "Our Staff and Board" on the web site home page, then "Teaching Artists Bios."

P.S. 8's School-based Support Team

By **Melissa Milgrom**, Third-Grade and Pre-K Parent

It used to be that when a child had difficulty in one area, say holding a pencil or pronouncing multi-syllabic words, that issue was dealt with in isolation. Today, such issues are tackled holistically by a group of specialists who work together. Known collectively as P.S. 8's School-based Support Team (SBST), the specialists – an occupational therapist, a special education specialist, a school counselor, a social worker, a school psychologist, a speech therapist, and a physical therapist – collaborate with each other and classroom teachers to assess and support the needs of a particular child whose parents and teachers have already applied for services. *Currents* recently went up to the second floor to meet the people behind the titles.

"These kids are under a lot of stress," says school occupational therapist **Cristin Keeler** whose far-ranging expertise in fine-motor function enables her to help kids master everything from balance and coordination to tying shoes, holding scissors, and handwriting. "They know they aren't functioning like their peers. I try to develop a program that reduces that stress level. I'll even add yoga and relaxation techniques."

You may know **Carol Parness** from attending her workshops on adolescence or how to communicate with your teacher. Parness is P.S. 8's special education specialist. Her role on the team is to teach kids strategies to help them do math and reading. This means implementing a flexible plan that suits the ever-changing needs of the child and the teacher. "Part of my role is to support the teacher. It's a give and take."

Johanna Provenzano is P.S. 8's school counselor. Her role is to provide crisis intervention, conflict resolution, and approaches to discipline. She also offers suggestions on how to structure a child's "at-home time" and gives consultations for middle schools. "Guidance is an out-dated term," she says. "It suggests that we know what's best for the child when working with the families is more beneficial."

Whereas Provenzano mostly counsels students on academic-related issues, **Ian Griffin**, school social worker, counsels students on social and emotional ones, recording their social histories and, if need be, meeting with parents to explain their rights under the No Child Left Behind law.

Desha Scott, school psychologist, assesses children for academic delays, social and emotional functioning, and how they handle interpersonal relationships. For Scott, this means providing support for teachers and parents. "I'd like to see more effective collaboration between schools and parents," she says. "Parents need more intervention strategies prior to the evaluation process that's provided by me and the team."

Mary Molluso, speech therapist, works with students who have difficulty with articulation and phonological processing, auditory memory, comprehension (receptive language, expressive language, sequencing, concepts) and social communication. She usually meets with kids in groups. By the time Molluso starts to work with a child he or she has already been evaluated by an outside consultant (standard assessment tests) and Molluso has met with the SBST and with the child's parents.

Jane Berger, physical therapist, works with kids who need extra help, say, holding a pencil or sitting upright or walking safely down the stairs. These are functional issues that limit learning.

Once a student is evaluated and services are mandated, the entire team sits down and hashes out a multi-disciplinary approach to the particular issue. "We put it all together and come up with functional goals," explains Berger. Individual team members then meet with the parents and the classroom teacher to put the plan into action.

Recently at P.S. 8

Featured photos from around school — and beyond...!

Got a fun photo from the classroom or a recent field trip? Submit it to *Currents* and we'll try to include it in an upcoming issue. Contact Editor Jane Pook at jane@rsch.com for details.



Students from K 103 enjoying a hay ride at the always popular Green Meadows Farm in Queens.

SCHOOL CALENDAR winter/spring 2007

Jan 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Feb 19-23	Midwinter Recess
Mar 20-21	Parent Teacher Conferences (early dismissal on March 20)
Apr 2-10	Spring Recess
May 28	Memorial Day
Jun 7	Chancellor's Conference Day
Jun 27	Last Day of School

Putting the **F-U-N** in **Fund**-raising

The Fund-Raising committee has many wonderful events in store for us this spring:

PS 8 Read-a-thon 2007

A school-wide Read-a-thon will kick-off on January 15 with a Book Fair at the Court Street Barnes & Noble. At 5pm Principal Seth Phillips and some of P.S. 8's teachers will read their favorite stories and poems.

That day, ten- to twenty-percent of net sales from purchases at the Court Street store accompanied by a P.S. 8 voucher will go to the school in either a cash or book donation.

Store hours are 9am-11pm.
The Read-a-thon will end on February 14.

What is a Read-a-thon? People pledge a certain amount of money for every minute a child reads. Children in grades 1-5 do the reading themselves. Children in Pre-K and Kindergarten can count time that adults read to them. Three cents per minute is the suggested amount, but any amount will do. All proceeds go to P.S. 8.

A **Silent Auction** open to the entire Brooklyn Heights community will be held at Bargemusic. Look for more information in March.

Our annual **Paddlewheeler Festival** will be held on May 5.

Let's not forget the P.S. 8 **General Appeal**. Our goal is to raise \$75,000 this year to help our school maintain enrichment programs when our magnet grant runs out next year.

You may have noticed the fabulous bas-relief in the main hallway that Pre-K dad Davide Cantoni has created to let everybody follow the progress of the fundraiser. Please contribute whatever you can and watch as we paddle toward our goal.

P.S. 8's Own

<NANOSQUAD>

Competes in Robotics Tournament
at Brooklyn Tech High School



Lego® Robotics is among the afterschool clusters offered at P.S. 8. This exciting program gives students the opportunity to design, build and program electronic robots from specially-configured Lego® building block kits. Students then compete with other schools in tournaments that test the accuracy, integrity and ingenuity of their robot designs. The next scheduled tournament is slated for Saturday, January 27, at Riverbank State Park. Feel free to come by and cheer on the P.S. 8 team, "NanoSquad."

Parents and students (Grades 3 and up only) interested in becoming involved in robotics should contact Ms. Hayes in Rm. 307 or send her an e-mail at Bklyn7581@aol.com.

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